

By MICHAEL KNOX Wycombe 3, Cheltenham 0

DYLAN Evans, who scored 25 times in his one season with Cheltenham Town, had a hand in two of Wycombe Wanderers' three goals that sunk his old club in a friendly at Loakes Park on Tuesday night.

Evans, who cannot command a regular place in the first team, showed close control at a high speed in a fine display, which allied to the skills of Tony Horseman and Keith Searle was too much for his former colleagues.

Wanderers' first goal came in the fourth minute as a result of some brilliant play by Evans, who turned past The Robins' centre-half Alan Jefferies in a flash before sending a looping cross into the middle. Searle placed it perfectly into the far corner of the goal with a clever first-time shot.

Dave Lewis, renowned in Southern League circles as a most dangerous striker and scorer of 43 goals in competitive games this season, had probably Cheltenham's best chance of the match a minute later, but he half-volleyed the ball wide from close range after being set up by good play from John Davies and Colin Hall.

Wycombe, who included all the non-regular first-teamers other than Dave Bullock, were clearly, at even this early stage, the more proficient side. The visitors, with seven regulars in their side never matched the Blues' ability to create openings.

This was a pity in one respect for they did not really test Wycombe's deputy goalkeeper Brian Steventon. He mishandled the ball a couple of times early on, but bent down quickly enough to stop a hard low shot from Crowley after 30 minutes.

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He got right behind a 20 yard drive following a corner, from the former Oxford United striker Ken Skeen before the break, but need not have bothered to come out for the second half, because he was virtually unemployed.

Wycombe's second goal came in the 36th minute after a hull in the action. Howard Kennedy, who tried several unsuccessful and inaccurate long shots at goal, stepped up the pace with a strong run to the edge of the Cheltenham penalty area.

He flicked the ball out to the right, where Evans broke away from Julian Lailey before firing a shot at Ken Hall's feet. The goalkeeper could not hold it and Tony Horseman came racing in to knock home the rebound from five yards.

Cheltenham brought on Pat Casey and Tony Wagstaffe for Tony Cooper and John Murphy at the start of the second half in an attempt to instil more fire into the midfield. But this move made little difference, although Casey showed some nice touches on the left wing without ever looking dangerous.

So the rally, the Robins showed when trailing by two goals in the F.A. Cup first round tie between the sides in November, was not repeated. One major contributory factor towards this was the Wycombe defence, which has looked as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar since the turn of the year.

Alan Phillips and Keith Mead are so quick at blotting out attacks that opposing forwards rarely get a look in, as Dave Lewis will readily testify. Paul Griffiths who came in for Paul Birdseye slotted in neatly and looks an outstanding prospect at right back.

Another 'squad' player in the side was the popular local favourite Graham Mackenzie. After slow uncertain start, in which his passing was somewhat awry, the red-headed mid-field man improved as the game went along.

He crowned his perfor-

mance with a goal in the 69th minute. After a period of sustained Wycombe pressure, the ball came out to Mackenzie on the edge of the penalty area. With a clear view, he struck a perfect 15-yard shot inside the right hand upright and left Ken Hall groping for thin air.

Wycombe dominated the match from here on, apart from one nasty moment, when Lewis showed why he has scored so consistently. Seizing on one of the rare loose balls in the Wycombe penalty area, he first-timed it with tremendous power into the side netting.

With Dave Alexander busying himself in midfield and the front three exhibiting their considerable skills, Wanderers kept pressing to the end, although some of the crowd left before local referee Ian Graham, who had an easy game to handle, blew the final whistle.

WYCOMBE: B. Steventon; P. Griffiths, G. Hand, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Alexander, D. Evans, H. Kennedy, K. Searle, G. Mackenzie, A. Horseman. Sub: M. Holifield (not used).

CHELTONHAM: K. Hall; T. Jones, J. Lailey, A. Jefferies, J. Murphy (sub: A. Wagstaffe 46th min), A. Cooper (sub: P. Casey 46th min), P. Crowley, J. Davies, D. Lewis, K. Skeen, C. Hall.

Referee: I. Graham (High Wycombe).

Half-time 2-0. Scorers:
Wycombe — Searle (4 mins), Horseman (36), Mackenzie (69).

Attendance: 500 (approx).